Calling all girls: Coding is cool!

January 14 2014

The San Diego Supercomputer Center (SDSC) at the University of California, San Diego, in a partnership with other local universities and industry support groups, is launching a non-profit collaborative community program aimed at encouraging and educating young women to learn and apply computing skills.

The program, called [GirlTECH San Diego](#), is being launched this month by a partnership that so far includes UC San Diego, San Diego State University, the University of San Diego, and Point Loma Nazarene University. Workshops will begin later this quarter.

"Some [young women](#) lack interest because they don't realize that computing will empower them in any field they pursue, and those with an interest in computing don't necessarily pursue greater skill development because it's either not available at their school or because they lack self-confidence to participate in what is perceived as a male-oriented geek environment," said Diane Baxter, SDSC's education director. "GirlTECH San Diego creates opportunities for young women with an interest in computing to be empowered by that interest, and to share that interest with peers in a social, collaborative, positive, and directed learning environment."

The GirlTECH program was created in response to several recent statistics, including this published in a U.S. Department of Workforce Readiness publication:

- 90% of high schools in the U.S. do not teach [computer](#) science.

In many other countries, computer science courses are required.
- Women hold less than 25% of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) jobs.
- Only 19% of students enrolled in Advanced Placement Computer Science courses are female.
- Software jobs outnumber qualified applicants three-to-one. The gap is one million jobs over 10 years, and these are some of the highest paying jobs.
- San Diego alone faces a shortage of more than 4,000 software experts (San Diego Software Industry Council, 2011)

Initially, GirlTECH San Diego will be focused on providing afterschool computing clubs for secondary school girls in educational community settings at various levels.

"At the middle school level, those computing clubs will help develop shared interests and friendships," said Baxter. "At the high school level, and upon reaching a certain level of computing skills, students will have an opportunity to apply for paid positions as summer camp instructors, honing and strengthening their technology leadership and mentoring skills. At the undergraduate level, these computer science students will be in a strong position to take advantage of opportunities to teach and inspire others while boosting their resumes as they start their careers."

On the academic side, GirlTECH San Diego will extend the institution's teaching curriculum beyond the classroom and provide a stimulating environment for students seeking more hands-on involvement, while providing a future source of computer science employees to technology-oriented companies both locally and nationally.

But what about young men who are interested in the computational sciences?

"They will not be turned away," said Baxter, "although the focus of the program and its activities are geared toward young women to help stimulate their interest in computer science as both a learning experience and a rewarding career."

Provided by University of California - San Diego

Citation: Calling all girls: Coding is cool! (2014, January 14) retrieved 18 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2014-01-girls-coding-cool.html